

## Daingerfield Island

At Daingerfield Island, you can get lunch at the snack bar, picnic outside, watch the airplanes take-off from National Airport, and watch the sailboats and windsurfers blow by. Not actually an island, the flat and mostly wooded park is the site of the first permanent Alexandria settlement; established by Simon Pearson in 1696. Many earlier settlers in the area were killed in wars with Powhatan and Susquehannock Indians. Diphtheria, malaria, and stormy weathers which killed crops, took their tolls on many others. The park is just north of present day Old Town Alexandria, off the George Washington Parkway and the Mt. Vernon Trail. It's also within easy reach of Four Mile Run and the trails there.

The City of Alexandria history actually dates even further back in time to 1669 when the Governor of Virginia awarded the land to an English ship captain who had brought 120 people to live in Virginia. The captain turned the land over for 6,000 pounds of tobacco and cask to John Alexander. There was an overlap of the lands awarded, with lands previously owned by Margaret Brent. She was the first female barrister in America (1640) and a "substantial" landholder. She also was the first suffragette, having argued unsuccessfully for the right to vote in the Maryland assembly before moving to Virginia with her brother Giles. The land dispute was resolved by John Alexander's heirs for an additional 10,500 pounds of tobacco which went to Brent's estate. It wasn't until 1749 that the township was petitioned and named Alexandria (<http://ci.alexandria.va.us/about-alexandria/about.html>). The original surveying was assisted by the then teenaged George Washington. The eventual first President was drilling troops in Market Square six years later. The city became one of the main trading ports for the colonies. Robert E. Lee grew-up there in the early 1800's when it was temporarily part of the newly established District of Columbia. The federal government ceded it back to Virginia in 1847. Slave auctioning was held in the city. Benjamin Hallowell, a Quaker teacher, and six others formed the Lyceum Company in 1834 which promoted public education through a series of debates which "often concerned biology and philosophy" (Office of Historic Alexandria: <http://ci.alexandria.va.us/oha/lyceum/ly-what-is.html>). Politics and religion were not discussed due to lack of civility manageable on those topics. During the Civil War, the city was occupied by the North and made into the Restored Government of Virginia, representing 7 federally controlled Virginia counties. Electricity came to Alexandria, in 1889, and electric streetcars operated by 1892. In 1920, the Torpedo Factory was built. It was used in WWI and used as a munitions factory during WWII. In 1974, it was turned into a very successful arts center. Among the modern accomplishments listed by the city include the defeat of a plan for 76,000 seat football stadium at Potomac Yard. Shopping malls have been built there instead. The Saint Patrick's Day and the Fourth of July celebrations are yearly city highlights.

### Getting There

From Northern Fairfax County, VA or Montgomery County, MD

Exit the Capitol Beltway, I-95, southbound onto the George Washington Parkway. After 14 miles, before reaching Old Town Alexandria, turn left into Daingerfield Island Park. Follow the road around to the left. Park and start near the restrooms and water fountains.

### From Southern Fairfax County, VA

Exit the Capitol Beltway, I-95, northbound onto Henry G. Shirley Highway (I-395). After approximately 9.5 miles exit southbound onto the George Washington Parkway. After 3.1 miles, before reaching Old Town Alexandria, turn left into Daingerfield Island Park. Follow the road around to the left. Park and start near the restrooms and water fountains.

### From Prince Georges County, MD

Use the Capital Beltway (I-95), to get to Rte. 50 west or I-295 north. From either, take the westbound Southeast Freeway (I-395) after 11 miles or approximately 6 miles respectively. Follow the Southeast Freeway across the river into Virginia. Do not use the express lanes. Take the second exit ramp immediately after crossing the bridge, onto the southbound George Washington Parkway. After 3.1 miles, before reaching Old Town Alexandria, turn left into Daingerfield Island Park. Follow the road around to the left. Park and start near the restrooms and water fountains.

## **Area Routes**

### Oronoco Bay Park (3.55 or 3.5 miles, III)

The City of Alexandria has continually worked at bettering it's Potomac River waterfront properties. An unusual amount of land has been made publically accessible. On just about any summer weekend, you can find lots of people out strolling, shopping, playing volleyball, or just sitting, relaxing and taking it all in. Oronoco Bay Park is one of the city's newer additions. Come out from Daingerfield Island on the Mt. Vernon Trail, past the wetland, and the power plant along the riverside. Just before you reach the railroad tracks, turn left on the Riverside Trail that switchbacks down to the riverside into Oronoco Bay Park. Cycling is not allowed in the park. At first the bluestone trail is squeezed in between buildings and the river, right on the water's edge. Rounding a bend past some sculptures, cross a restored canal lock. Between 1843 and 1886, the canal was used to carry goods from Alexandria ports 7 miles, 38 vertical feet through 4 lifts, all the way to Georgetown. Oronoco, was the name of a variety of tobacco that was traded. The park widens at this point and the trail winds past benches through it to the end at Union and Pendleton streets. Turn around to the right on the Mt. Vernon Trail following the railroad tracks. To return optionally cross the tracks to stay on the Mt. Vernon Trail going back the way you came out, or continue straight with the tracks on what was the old Mt. Vernon trail. If you go straight, the trail climbs gently around the power plant, getting near to the George Washington Parkway. It drops again to join the current Mt. Vernon Trail to get back to Daingerfield Island.

### Commonwealth (7.85 miles, VII)

This largely urban route goes along the streets of Old Town Alexandria, and along the on-the-street bike route of Commonwealth Avenue. Follow the Mt. Vernon Trail south from Daingerfield Island (see Oronoco Bay Park). At Pendleton St., the trail runs out and you must use Union St. You will pass Founder's Park on the left. When I used to bicycle commute through here, seeing the sun rises over the park and river were wonderful. For a while, you can use the sidewalks, but as you near the more touristed areas near King St., you may find them too busy. Note the high water marks on the corner of the Torpedo Factory (now an arts center). The

streets flood regularly during big spring runoffs and storms. A third of a mile past King St., turn onto the trail on your right in Pomander Park, and into the lighted, former railroad tunnel. The trail ends after the tunnel and you must use sidewalks for the next few miles. A very short segment passes through an area of low income housing. After crossing Patrick St., Rte. 1, you'll near the old cemeteries of the city. Penny Hill Cemetery dates back to 1796. Some side streets eventually put you on Daingerfield Rd. After crossing King Street, the city congestion subsides and Daingerfield Rd. becomes Commonwealth Ave. Commonwealth Ave. is a mostly residential street. Though a main thoroughway, it is a bike route and relatively quiet. Water and restroom stops are available at two recreation centers. The road is also used for Alexandria's Turkey Trot race. At the end of the road, turn right toward the river and Route 1 on a short part of the paved Wayne F. Anderson Trail. Connect with the Four Mile Run Trail to get under the highways and railroads, then take the Mt. Vernon Trail back to Daingerfield Island.

### **Nearby and Connecting Zones**

Cameron Run Regional Park  
Aurora Hills

Belle Haven Park and Marina

### **What to do Afterward**

#### Food and Drink

Potomac Landing - on Daingerfield Island; indoor/outdoor - 703 548-0001

Hard Times Café - The founding store of the locally famed chilli chain restaurant - 703 683-5340

Fish Market - 703 836-5676

Deli-on-the-Strand - fresh bread subs and sandwiches - 703 548-7222

Al's Steak House - Alexandria - 703 836-9443

and many, many more in Old Town Alexandria

#### Entertainment and Edification

Gadsby's Tavern Museum - (703) 838-4242

Carlyle House Historic Park - (703) 549-2997

Lyceum - 201 S Washington St - (703) 838-4994

Alexandria Archeology - (703) 838-4399

Birchmere - live folk music near Crystal City - 703 549-5919

Washington Sailing Marina - boat and windsurfer rentals at Daingerfield Island - 703 548-9027

Gravelly Point - view the airplanes at the airport

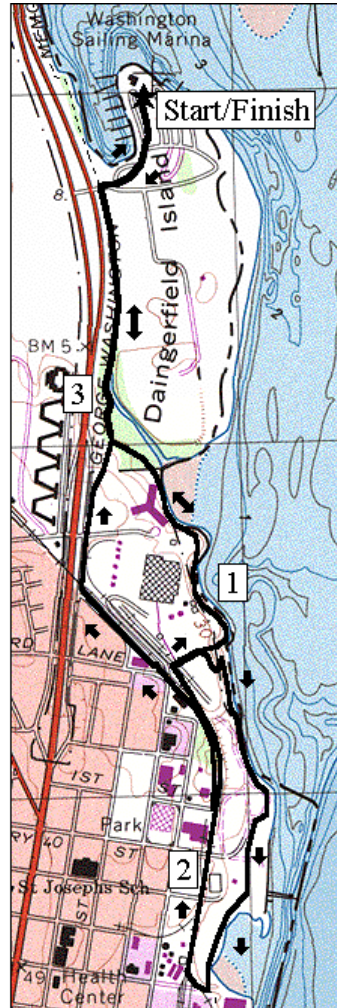
## Oronoco Bay Park

Distance: 3.55 or 3.5 miles

Rating: III; paved and unpaved riverside trails; mostly sunny and flat

### 3.55 Mile Route

- 0.0 from the parking lot near the restrooms go out the exit road
- L 0.15 Mt Vernon Trail
- BL 0.6 trail X (triangle); R is old Mt Vernon Trail  
concrete bridge (! blind corner)  
;mile 1.0 is at wooden bridge
- L 1.2 River Walk Trail (no bicycling)
- 1.5 canal lock
- R 1.8 Pendleton St; leave Oronoco Bay Park; Mt Vernon Trail
- R 1.8 paved Mt Vernon Trail head (cut the corner)
- <\*
- XS 2.1 cross the RR tracks at 1<sup>st</sup> St to stay on the Mt Vernon Trail
- 2.3 trail X on L crosses tracks;  
River Walk Trail on R
- 2.55 concrete bridge w/blind corner
- BR 2.9 trail X (triangle); L is old Mt Vernon Trail
- >\*
- R 3.35 road to the Washington Sailing Marina/Daingerfield Island
- 3.55 parking lot near restrooms/water



MN TN  
10 1/2°  
0 1000 FEET 0 500m 1000m 1 MILE  
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### \*3.5 Mile Route

### Mt Vernon trail & River Walk Trail

- S 2.1 1<sup>st</sup> St; leave Mt Vernon trail as it crosses the RR tracks; S is old the Mt Vernon Trail
- 2.3 trail X on R crosses tracks to
- BR 2.6 E Abington Dr
- BL 2.85 trail X (triangle); Mt Vernon Trail (pickup cues at mile 3.35 on 3.55 mile route)

## Commonwealth

Distance: 7.85 miles

Rating: VII; mostly city sidewalks with some paved trails

- |     |  |    |   |
|-----|--|----|---|
| 0.0 | from the parking lot near the restrooms go out the exit road         | L  | 3.35 Duke St (Rte 236)  |
| L   | 0.15 Mt Vernon Trail   | R  | 3.6 Daingerfield Rd   |
| BL  | 0.6 trail X (triangle); R is old Mt Vernon Trail                     |    | 3.75 King St (Rte 7); Daingerfield Rd becomes Commonwealth Ave.     |
|     | 1.0 concrete bridge w/blind corner (!); mile 1.0 is at wooden bridge |    | 3.85 metro bridge underpass   |
|     | 1.2 River Walk Trail on L (no bicycling)                             |    | 4.45 E Braddock Rd  |
| XS  | 1.4 cross RR tracks at 1 <sup>st</sup> St (unmarked)                 |    | 5.35 Mt Vernon Rec Center (water)                                   |
| BL  | 1.75 end of paved trail at Pendleton St                              |    | 5.5 Mt Vernon Ave   |
| R   | 1.8 Union St   | R  | 5.85 W Glebe Rd   |
|     | 2.15 King St   |    | 5.95 Cora Kelly Rec Center (water)                                  |
| R   | 2.5 Cameron Run Trail (tunnel)                                       |    |   |
|     | 2.6 S Royal St at end of tunnel; continue S on Wilkes St             | R  | 6.2 Wayne F Anderson Trail (paved)                                  |
|     | 2.85 S Washington St   | L  | 6.4 sidewalk on Jeff Davis Hwy, Rte 1                               |
|     | 2.9 begin trail at S Columbus St                                     | L  | 6.45 trail X on L to Four Mile Run Trail                            |
|     | 3.0 Patrick St (Rte 1); end of trail; continue on Wilkes St          | UL | 6.5 Four Mile Run Trail; go under bridges for Rte 1, RR's & parkway |
| R   | 3.2 S Payne St; go through auto barrier                              | L  | 6.8 Mt Vernon Trail (triangle X)                                    |
|     |  | L  | 7.65 park road to the Washington Sailing Marina/Daingerfield Island |
|     |  |    | 7.85 parking lot near restrooms/water                               |

